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SUBJECT: CZECH PM PUBLICLY WELCOMES U.S. MISSILE DEFENSE
RADAR OFFER, SAYS REFERENDUM UNNECESSARY

REF: STATE 7445

Classified By: DCM Cameron Munter
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) DCM delivered reftel non paper on the fielding of U.S. missile defense assets to Czech Deputy Foreign Minister Tomas Pojar at 10:45 a.m., Saturday, January 20. Pojar, who was visibly excited, welcomed the document, indicating that it largely tracked with what he had heard about Undersecretary Joseph's January 19 meeting with Czech Ambassador Kolar in Washington.

¶2. (U) At 11:00 a.m., Czech PM Mirek Topolanek led a press conference on missile defense at government headquarters. He was joined on the podium by Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg, Defense Minister Vlasta Parkanova, Chief of the General Staff General Pavel Stefka, and DFM Pojar. Topolanek said that hosting an element of missile defense was in the interests of Czech citizens and would make them safer. He emphasized that the radar would not have any negative impact on the quality of life of local residents or on the environment. Topolanek, in response to a journalist's query about calls for a referendum, said that a strategic and technical matter such as missile defense would be best handled in the parliament. When questioned about economics Topolanek highlighted the prestige associated with the invitation to begin negotiations, and the contribution this would make to the security of allies, before saying he expected that a U.S. facility could have an impact on unemployment in the chosen location (which he did not specify) and possibly benefit local suppliers.

¶3. (U) FM Schwarzenberg said that the first step would be to receive an official written invitation to begin negotiations from the United States. He emphasized that this will be a long and deliberative negotiation process. DM Parkanova expressed her hope that politicians would deal with the issue in a responsible manner, avoiding any attempt to distort the issue for political gain. General Stefka observed that for financial and technical reasons the Czech armed forces were not equipped to defend the Czech Republic from missile threats and participation in the U.S. missile defense system would enable the defense of the Czech public and that of allies.
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